

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A postage evidencing meter comprising:
an authorization database for storing parameters for ~~at least one selected user~~ a plurality of users, wherein the parameters ~~separately limit the selected user's~~ each user of said plurality of users ability to evidence postage using the meter, ~~wherein limits on each user's ability to evidence postage provided by said parameters are in addition to a total amount of postage available from said postage evidencing meter; and~~
a processor operable to access said authorization database and limit each user of said plurality of users' ability to evidence postage using the meter in accordance with corresponding ones of the parameters of said authorization database.
2. (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameters include a maximum postage amount that ~~the~~ a selected user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.
3. (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameters include a period of time during which ~~the~~ a selected user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.
4. (Currently Amended) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the parameters include:
a maximum postage amount that ~~the~~ a selected user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage over a selected period of time.
5. (Original) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 further comprising:
a user interface;
a printer; and
a security module.
6. (Original) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the authorization database is stored on a removable storage device.

7. (Original) The postage evidencing meter of claim 1 wherein the authorization database is coupled to the meter via a communication link to a remote postage information system.

8. (Currently Amended) A system for controlling postage usage, said system comprising:

~~one or more at least one~~ postage evidencing ~~meters~~ meter having a communication module for providing a communication link between the postage evidencing meter and a postage information system, wherein the postage information system includes a database for storing postage usage parameters for ~~at least one selected user~~ a plurality of users, wherein the parameters separately ~~limit the selected user's~~ each user of said plurality of users' ability to evidence postage using the meter, said at least one postage evidencing meter having a processor operable to access said database through said communication module and separately limit each user of said plurality of users' ability to evidence postage in accordance with corresponding ones of said parameters.

9. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the parameters include a maximum postage amount that ~~the~~ a selected user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

10. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the parameters include a period of time during which ~~the~~ a selected user of said plurality of users is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

11. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 8 wherein the parameters include: a maximum postage amount that ~~the~~ a selected user of said plurality of users is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage during a selected period of time.

12. (Original) The system of claim 8 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

13. (Original) The system of claim 8 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A system for controlling postage usage, comprising:
at least two postage evidencing meters, each meter having a processor and a communication module for providing a communication link between the at least two meters, at least one postage evidencing meter of said at least two postage evidencing meters storing postage usage parameters for a plurality of users, wherein said postage usage parameters define different postage evidencing limits with respect to users of said plurality of users, wherein postage usage parameters for at least one selected user of said plurality of users are exchanged between said meters via the communication link, and wherein the processor of the meter receiving said postage usage parameters ~~control~~ controls the selected user's ability to evidence postage using the receiving meter in accordance with the received postage usage parameters.

16. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein the parameters include a maximum postage amount that the selected user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage.

17. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein the parameters include a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced by the selected user during a selected period of time.

18. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15 wherein the parameters include:

a maximum postage amount that the selected user is allowed to use on the meter to evidence postage; and

a period of time during which the selected user is allowed to use the meter to evidence postage.

19. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

20. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the communications link is a wireline link.

21. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein said communication link is used to transfer postage values securely between the at least two meters using cryptographic techniques.

22. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the exchange of postage usage parameters is bi-directional.

23. (Original) A method for transferring postage value between postage evidencing devices, comprising:

receiving a request for a postage value transfer, the request identifying a destination device and an amount of postage value to be transferred;

creating a postage value token at a first postage evidencing device;

subtracting the postage value amount from registers in the first postage evidencing device;

transferring the postage value token to a second postage evidencing device;

verifying the postage value token at the second postage evidencing device; and

adding the postage value to registers at the second postage evidencing device.

24. (Original) The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 further comprising:

transferring the postage value using a communications link between the first and second postage evidencing devices.

25. (Original) The method for transferring postage value of claim 24 wherein the communication link is a wireless link.

26. (Original) The method for transferring postage value of claim 24 wherein the communication link is a wireline link.

27. (Original) The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 further comprising:

transferring the postage value using a removable storage device.

28. (Original) The method for transferring postage value of claim 23 wherein the postage value token is a cryptographically secure token.

29. (Currently Amended) A method for controlling postage usage comprising:
storing postage usage parameters for a plurality of users in a postage usage database,
wherein said postage usage parameters establish separate postage evidencing limits for users
of said plurality of users, said postage evidencing limits being independent of an available
postage balance of a postage meter used for evidencing postage;

receiving a request to evidence postage from a selected user of said plurality of users;
determining, based on the selected user's postage usage parameters ~~user postage~~
~~account~~, if sufficient postage is available within a current period of time to fulfill the request
for the selected user;

determining if sufficient postage is available from the available postage balance of
said postage meter used for evidencing postage to fulfill the request for the selected user;

evidencing a requested postage amount if said determining determines that sufficient
postage is available within the current period of time and if said determining determines that
sufficient postage is available within the available postage balance; and

recording postage usage for the selected user in the ~~user postage~~ usage database
~~account; and~~

deducting an amount of postage used to fulfill the request for the selected user from
the available postage balance.

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29 further comprising:
~~receiving a request to use the user postage account; and~~
authenticating the selected user.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29 further comprising:
receiving a request to configure parameters for the selected user; and
modifying postage usage limits in the postage usage database ~~user postage account~~.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 31 wherein the usage limits are
selected from the group consisting of:

a maximum amount of postage that can be evidenced for the selected user;
a time period during which the selected user is authorized to evidence postage; and
a class of postage that the selected user is authorized to evidence.

33. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29 further comprising:
receiving a request to purchase postage for the selected user; and
adding a purchased postage value to the postage usage database ~~user postage account~~
for the selected user.